

29. Relational space and global societal dynamics

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There seems to exist a broadly shared conviction within the scientific literature that the main political and economic relations that constitute the world order are changing rapidly and radically since the end of the 20th century. At the same time however there is great and worldwide uncertainty about the direction in which the world is evolving. Within this setting everyday space reveals itself as a complex and open dynamic that is material as well as imaginative. This observation calls for further research into a relational understanding of space and societal dynamics, but brings with it also the question as to what this understanding may mean in a more applied sense: What are the consequences of understanding space as an open and productive process in terms of spatial policy, social justice, inclusion, representation, investment, process, spatial quality, urban design, innovation, architecture, economic development, communication, territory, mobility, housing, recreation, open space, natural resources, morphology, landscape, structure, participation, scale, ...? The explorative literature research on relational space and global societal dynamics that was done for the policy centre connects to this questioning. Drawing upon an analysis of part of the broader discourse on globalization it comes to the conclusion that a highly complex dynamic is at work in the above mentioned worldwide transformation consisting of an intertwining of global, urban and local relations which is generating highly competitive, fragmented, uneven, uncertain and contested spaces. Against this horizon the spatial challenges for a region like Flanders seem to lie not so much in globalization as an inevitable and anonymous force, but in the strategic understanding of its own local/regional spatial dynamics and the broader configurations which it supports and is depending upon. On this alternative approach, a reflection will be given based upon the actual research within the Policy Center, selected policy challenges and key questions for future research.

Keywords: relational space, global-local dynamics, transversal spatial policies, challenges for research

30. Towards a new Policy Plan for Flanders' space: focusing on elements of strategic importance

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The first strategic planning document for Flanders, the Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders, already dates from 1997. Today, the Flemish government feels a growing need to renew its vision on the future spatial development of Flanders. One reason is the advanced stage of the implementation of the current structure plan as it has been translated through numerous planning processes for urban areas, harbor areas and major elements of the natural and agricultural structure. Next, it becomes more and more obvious that the conceptual framework of the structure plan no longer efficiently addresses more recent societal challenges such as the adaptation to climate change, the shift towards renewable energy, the ageing of the population, the growing importance of the knowledge economy ...

Last but not least, spatial planning policy in Flanders is in urgent need of a new persuasive story line as the role and position of spatial visioning is daily at stake in the current dominant project - led policy approach. An already stated precondition for this new story line is that it should not be as comprehensive as the first structure plan but should strategically and selectively detect and focus on those themes and areas that are of strategic importance to the Flemish spatial structure. Since the Flemish government wants to launch a green paper for a new Policy Plan Space in December 2011, the congress paper and presentation will reveal its first outlines.

Key words: strategic planning, selectivity, visioning



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